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General Assembly

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Disarmament Commission

187th Meeting
Wednesday, 20 April 1994, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Mongbe . . . . . (Benin)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

General exchange of views on the three substantive agenda items *(continued)*

Mr. Rivero Rosario (Cuba) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Cuban delegation sincerely congratulates you, Sir, the other Vice-Chairmen, our Latin American colleague chosen as Rapporteur, and the Chairmen of the three Working Groups on your elections to your respective posts. We are certain that you will all carry out your responsibilities with success.

At the last session, Ambassador de Araujo Castro of Brazil and all the colleagues who assisted him in tackling the work of the Commission displayed experience and skill in achieving progress in our work. We are grateful to them for their accomplishments.

The Cuban delegation wants to make a brief contribution to this rapid but useful exchange of views on the three substantive items on the Disarmament Commission agenda for 1994. My delegation knows that a major effort is needed to fulfil the General Assembly's mandate to the Commission: to conclude at this session our work on the items on nuclear disarmament and on science and technology, and to begin our consideration of the new item on international arms transfers, with emphasis on the matter of illicit transfers.

On nuclear disarmament, we have before us an informal document resulting from Ambassador Batiouk's consultations during last year's meetings of the Commission and in recent months. My delegation considers that document to contain a most useful set of elements that can certainly form the basis of our work. In that connection, my delegation feels that the text needs to be made more balanced, by including the views of various delegations - for example, in paragraphs 24 and 25, on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and in paragraph 32, on so-called security guarantees.

The document must also contain clearer reference to, and more-in-depth treatment of questions my delegations considers important with respect to this item. These include the prohibition of the production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes, the suspension of research and development on new types of weapons, and the establishment of a process, in defined stages and under strict international control, towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. These and other ideas are set out in the working paper my delegation submitted to the working group at the 1992 session.

On the role of science and technology, we consider that the Chairman's working paper with which our work ended last year is a good basis for continued negotiations at the current session. Because of the importance it attaches to this item, my delegation submitted a working paper during last year's work (A/CN.10/175); this document remains valid.

Control regimes for the export of critical technology by certain countries and participation in international non-proliferation instruments are two issues on which the views of delegations are polarized. On control regimes, we consider that a solution can be found only by adequately reflecting the views and the interests of both suppliers and

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recipients of these technologies. That would help reach the parallel objectives of greater security and the promotion of international cooperation for peaceful purposes.

For its part, Cuba would be prepared to accept reasonable, appropriate and necessary limitations on the transfer of sophisticated technology that could be used for military purposes, but such limitations must be adopted through non-discriminatory, internationally negotiated multilateral agreements. Hence, the Cuban delegation agrees with other delegations that have referred to the need for a multilateral dialogue to adopt universally acceptable international norms governing the transfer of dual-use technology. This dialogue should be carried out under United Nations auspices.

Finally, let me say a few words about the new item, on international arms transfers, with particular reference to illicit arms trafficking. This is the first year of our discussion of this item, and there should be a general exchange of views on it. We consider the document submitted by the Colombian delegation on this item to be most valuable. It certainly sets out very interesting ideas. We shall offer some ideas on this subject during the meetings of the working group.

Mr. Muthaura (Kenya): I have the honour to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, my delegation's congratulations on your election to preside over the current session of the Disarmament Commission. Your diplomatic skills give us confidence that you will steer the session to a successful conclusion. Our congratulations go also to the other officers of the Commission on their election, as well as to Ambassador de Araujo Castro for the able way in which he served as Chairman of the Commission's last session.

The 1994 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is taking place at a challenging period in the history of the United Nations. The prospects of rapid disarmament and arms limitation as envisaged by the international community following the end of the cold war have not produced the desired results in ensuring greater peace and security globally.

While acknowledging some of the recent positive developments in disarmament work, such as the encouraging initiatives between the two nuclear States, as demonstrated by the signing of the START II agreement, and the consequential improvement of relations between the super-Powers, as well as the conclusion of the chemical weapons Convention, we cannot ignore the rapidly growing number of conflicts in many regions of the world today. These conflicts indicate that there is greater need to address and establish closer international cooperation backed by broader follow-up machinery in the search for peace and disarmament.

The items we have on our agenda cover some of the areas which, in view of the changing world circumstances, would appear to require enhanced multilateral attention and cooperation. To meet the challenges, intensified activities are required on the bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels.

The multilateral approach to security and disarmament implies that the international community make the best use of instruments at its disposal. Since collective security is closely linked to the strengthening of the authority of the United Nations, the Organization should continue supporting the implementation of existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements as well as the negotiation of new instruments in this field.

The non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) is an important instrument which the United Nations should use more effectively to promote international peace and security. Efforts should be increased within the United Nations to ensure that all States Members of the Organization are party to the NPT. Universal application of the Treaty would serve as the cornerstone of disarmament efforts aimed at the elimination of nuclear weapons. In that regard, maximum support should be given to the ongoing negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty (CTBT) in the Conference on Disarmament. We acknowledge the role the treaty would play in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. There are also strong underlying reasons for urgently imposing a ban on the production of fissionable materials for weapons. A treaty towards this end would greatly strengthen the non-proliferation Treaty and would contribute significantly towards the limitation of the spread of nuclear weapons.

The international community should continue developing regional approaches to arms limitation and confidence-building as practical means to strengthen regional peace and security and to promote the process of global arms reduction. We consider regional disarmament to be a vital element and a confidence-building measure of significant importance. Towards this end, we support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as these are basically aimed at furthering the cause of disarmament and related fields.

The question of international arms transfers is closely related to the issue of regional disarmament. We have recently witnessed with deep concern an explosion of devastating conflicts in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. They are mainly the result of the fact that conventional weapons are easily available to whoever wants to use them and of the lack of human consideration on the part of arms merchants, as well as some degree of irresponsibility on the part of the arms-regulating agencies. The destructive capacity of conventional weapons and their widespread use are probably causing death and damage of a magnitude approaching the effects of the use of weapons of mass destruction. There is therefore an urgent need to give added attention to trade and control of the movement of conventional weapons. The detrimental effect of weapon transfers on regional security and stability is widespread and is particularly aggravated by the transfer of weapons to volatile areas. More attention should be focused on the role that national legislation can play in regulating and effectively monitoring legitimate arms transfers and in preventing illicit arms trafficking. One of the solutions could be focused on the control of exports and imports of arms both at their origin and at their destination. The paper submitted by Colombia is of great value to this Commission as we focus on this important issue.

It is absolutely necessary to address the issue of transparency in international arms transfers. Enhanced transparency of arms transfers facilitates measures of limitation and restriction by increasing confidence and reducing the risk of misperception. As a result of confidence-building efforts, States could be led to assess more positively the desirability of limiting arms transfers and establishing mechanisms to promote transparency. In this regard, efforts should be made to promote greater use of the arms Register.

The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields has to be re-emphasized. There is need for improved modalities to guarantee the transfer and utilization of technology for peaceful purposes. Global efforts would require the development of mechanisms to facilitate multilateral cooperation in the promotion and diversion of military technology for peaceful purposes.

Finally, we welcome the increasing awareness in the international community of the positive role that science and technology can play in the verification of existing and future disarmament measures. These applications of science and technology can contribute to confidence-building by providing the means to achieve greater transparency in military matters. Science and technology should make a substantial contribution to the effective implementation and application of arms-control and disarmament agreements.

Mr. Musuka (Zambia): Allow me to express my delegation's pleasure at seeing you, Mr. Chairman, presiding over the Disarmament Commission at its 1994 substantive session. I am sure that under your able leadership and with your diplomatic skills much progress will be achieved during this session. I should also like to express my delegation's sincere thanks to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Brazil, who was Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 1993 substantive session.

My delegation attaches great importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission in its search for international peace and security, with the main objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons. The need to pursue vigorously and monitor the process of nuclear disarmament is greater now than ever before, especially in view of the increase in the number of nuclear States and States on the nuclear threshold, and the recent developments in the Korean peninsula.

Against this negative background there are many positive achievements on the basis of which the international community must summon the political will to debate and make concrete decisions concerning nuclear disarmament. The positive contribution to international peace and security brought about by the changes in the former Soviet Union cannot be underestimated. They brought about a new political world regime and the end of the global ideological rivalry between the two super-Powers, and subsequently produced the conditions for scaling down armaments in the world. The prohibition of the development, production and use of chemical as well as biological weapons occurred in an environment which has contributed to confidence-building among the States which had stockpiled chemical and biological weapons. The success achieved and the political will exhibited in the elimination of chemical and biological weapons need to be applied with vigour in the field of nuclear weapons.

The maintenance of international peace and security is the responsibility of all Member States. Likewise, nuclear disarmament should also be the responsibility both of States that have nuclear weapons and of those that do not. It is imperative, when discussing the issues of nuclear disarmament, to emphasize that the proliferation of nuclear weapons can be brought under control only when an environment of trust and mutual understanding is fostered among world leaders by eliminating fear for their security.

The surest way to start building this confidence is for the nuclear-weapon States to show some commitment to arms control, arms reduction and confidence-building among States on the threshold of having nuclear-weapons and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Allow me to address the issue of nuclear weapons by quoting a statement made about 70 years ago:

> "There will one day spring from the brain of science a machine or force so fearful in its potentialities, so absolutely terrifying, that even man, the fighter, who will dare torture and death in order to inflict torture and death, will be appalled and will abandon war forever".

This was said by a famous inventor, Thomas Alva Edison. It is appropriate to note that today we are still continuing to discuss the issues of importance to us that concern all mankind.

Some recent achievements in the right direction of nuclear disarmament which the international community needs to build upon are the implementation of the INF Treaty between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the START treaty and the subsequent agreement on drastic reduction of strategic nuclear weapons by the year 2003, as well as the decision by the United States and the former Soviet Union to eliminate all land-based short-range nuclear weapons.

Equally important are the decisions by France and China to become parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); the denuclearization of Africa; and South Africa's abandonment of its nuclear weapons programme. The declared intention of some former Soviet republics to become non-nuclear and the positive developments in Latin America, Argentina and Brazil augur well for nuclear disarmament.

It is my delegation's considered view that to achieve nuclear disarmament, there is a need to underscore the functional linkage between the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT), the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons (NWC) to take the objective of a nuclear-free world beyond the 1995 NPT Review Conference. The CTBT and NPT, when applied in isolation, are not the best ways to achieve nuclear disarmament; they are now perceived by many non-nuclear-weapon States as a means of maintaining the status quo. This breeds secretive nuclear weapons programmes in which safeguards are totally ignored, to the danger of the international community.

I promised to be brief. However, we are discussing important issues, and we have all agreed that we are overburdened by the cost of modern weapons and are outright alarmed at the steady growth of nuclear weapons. Yet we have ways to alter the uncertain balance of terror to prevent man's final war.

Finally, as this important forum is meeting today, let us remember, as we look at the issues more seriously, that in negotiations civility is not a sign of weakness and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate. Let us also seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terror. Together, let us indeed explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap rivers and ocean-depths and encourage the art of peace. We should encourage peace, because there is never a good war or a bad peace.

Mr. Sukayri (Jordan): On behalf of the Jordanian delegation, I have the honour to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the 1994 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Your outstanding diplomatic skills, along with your dedication and long experience, give us the fullest assurances that under your guidance this Commission will be able to achieve its goals. I should like to assure you of my delegation's cooperation throughout the deliberations of this year's substantive session.

The three main items on the agenda of our current substantive session are all of the utmost importance to the general objective of maintaining international peace and security. At its previous substantive session the Disarmament Commission made tangible progress with regard to two items: "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons" and "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields". However, the fact that they have to be concluded this year makes this session even more demanding. Moreover, the great importance attached to the new item on our agenda, "International arms transfers, with particular reference to General Assembly Resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991", needs no further assertion.

Although the end of the cold war and the absence of East-West confrontation has undoubtedly contributed significantly to the achievement of the progress we have recently witnessed in the area of nuclear disarmament,

much remains to be done in order to arrive at a nuclear-free world. It is true that the threat of a global nuclear war has been considerably reduced, yet limited regional nuclear wars have become more likely, especially if the trend continues towards the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Nuclear proliferation has always posed a grave threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. However, in the contemporary world this problem has become one of the most important issues at the top of the international agenda.

Therefore, the strengthening of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime requires the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which in turn makes it imperative that all States that have not yet done so should accede to that Treaty and ratify it. The recent accession to the NPT by Kazakhstan, Belarus and Georgia as non-nuclear-weapon States has been very encouraging. We hope that States in other regions will soon follow suit.

The Middle East has been for a few decades one of the most volatile regions in the world. Nuclear proliferation in that region will undoubtedly portend more volatility. Therefore, the accession to the NPT by all States in the region, including Israel, pending the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, will contribute to tranquillity, which will pave the way for the success of the ongoing peace process in bringing about a comprehensive, just and durable peaceful settlement.

The peoples of the region attach great importance and look forward to next year's NPT Review and Extension Conference. However, concluding a comprehensive test-ban treaty and giving full security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States will contribute significantly to the hoped for indefinite extension of the NPT.

Science and technology have an important role to play in disarmament and related areas, such as verification of compliance and the conversion of military production for civilian purposes. It is therefore evident that science and technology, through their contribution to the implementation of arms control and disarmament agreements, can positively and substantially contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security - hence, the importance of working hard throughout the current session to conclude the in-depth study of this agenda item that began during the previous session.

Likewise, it is of the utmost importance to study deeply and thoroughly the question of "International arms transfers, with particular reference to General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991". This new item, which came to the Disarmament Commission agenda in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/77 A, is aimed at re-examining and strengthening the existing regime for the eradication of the international illicit trade in conventional arms, and at identifying possible new methods and measures to bring international illicit arms trafficking to an end. Though this basically requires full international cooperation, it is also imperative that new and innovative ideas be injected into such a regime. Fortunately, in the present post-cold-war era, the international climate is extremely encouraging for the taking of further measures. This chance must not be missed if peace and tranquillity are to replace fear and tension in our world.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.